

Retiree Report

January, 2006

A Quarterly Publication from the
Fairfax County Retirement Administration Agency
Designed for County Government Retirees ~

Tax Preparation Help from AARP

Most people who earn income need to file a tax return. The AARP Tax-Aide program was created to meet this need and to help low- and middle-income taxpayers prepare and file their income tax returns with the IRS, free of charge. Every year, from February 1st through April 15th, trained and certified volunteers will help prepare your federal tax return. For tax aid from AARP, you can search by zip code at the AARP internet site to find a Tax-Aide site near you. Visit www.aarp.org, to find information on Tax Aide locations, schedules, and additional contact information.

Important Information About AARP Tax-Aide Services

- Many AARP Tax-Aide sites are operated on an appointment basis. During tax season, check the Tax-Aide site locator for contact information and hours of operation.
- Limited sites are staffed by bilingual volunteers; check the site locator to see if the site nearest you offers bilingual assistance.

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Medicare Notes!

Medicare Part B Premium Increase *effective January 2006*

The premium for Medicare Part B increased to \$88.50 per month, effective January 1, 2006. For most of you, this premium is automatically deducted from your monthly Social Security check. However, there is good news too! Social Security granted a 4.1% benefit increase for 2006, which will help offset the Medicare premium increase.

The Medicare Part A deductible amount for 2006 is \$952 for each benefit period. Part A Medicare pays for inpatient hospital care, skilled nursing facility care and some home health care.

- Most people do **not** pay a monthly Part A premium because they or a spouse have 40 or more quarters of Medicare-covered employment.
 - ~ The Part A premium is \$216 per month for those with 30-39 quarters of Medicare-covered employment.
 - ~ The Part A premium is \$393 per month for people who are not otherwise eligible for premium free hospital insurance and have less than 30 quarters of Medicare-covered employment.

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Space Heater Safety *Please Take Note!*

With winter drawing near, this is the time you may look for those extra, economical ways to provide warmth in your home. Portable heaters are often seen as the answer to extra warmth, but they can lead to tragedy if they are not used properly. Here are a few safety tips for those using portable heaters:

- Use only appliances that cut off automatically if tipped over.
- Use only models that have been approved by a nationally recognized testing agency (UL or Factory Mutual).

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Board Meeting Schedule for 2006

January

11	Police Officers Retirement Board	1:30 PM
19	Employees' Retirement Board	3:30 PM
25	Uniformed Retirement Board	8:30 AM

February

08	Police Officers Retirement Board	1:30 PM
16	Employees' Retirement Board	3:30 PM
22	Uniformed Retirement Board	8:30 AM

March

01	<i>Employees' Investment Committee</i>	3:30 PM
08	Police Officers Retirement Board	1:30 PM
16	Employees' Retirement Board	3:30 PM
22	Uniformed Retirement Board	8:30 AM

April

12	Police Officers Retirement Board	1:30 PM
20	Employees' Retirement Board	3:30 PM
26	Uniformed Retirement Board	8:30 AM

May

10	Police Officers Retirement Board	1:30 PM
18	Employees' Retirement Board	3:30 PM
24	Uniformed Retirement Board	8:30 AM

June

07	<i>Employees' Investment Committee</i>	3:30 PM
14	Police Officers Retirement Board	1:30 PM
22	Employees' Retirement Board	3:30 PM
28	Uniformed Retirement Board	8:30 AM

July

12	Police Officers Retirement Board	1:30 PM
20	Employees' Retirement Board	3:30 PM
26	Uniformed Retirement Board	8:30 AM

August

No Board Meetings Scheduled

September

06	<i>Employees' Investment Committee</i>	3:30 PM
13	Police Officers Retirement Board	1:30 PM
21	Employees' Retirement Board	3:30 PM
27	Uniformed Retirement Board	8:30 AM

October

11	Police Officers Retirement Board	1:30 PM
19	Employees' Retirement Board	3:30 PM
25	Uniformed Retirement Board	8:30 AM

November

08	Police Officers Retirement Board	1:30 PM
16	Employees' Retirement Board	3:30 PM
15	Uniformed Retirement Board	8:30 AM

December

06	<i>Employees' Investment Committee</i>	3:30 PM
13	Police Officers Retirement Board	1:30 PM
21	Employees' Retirement Board	3:30 PM

Space Heater Safety

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- Keep combustible materials at least three feet away from space heaters.
- If using an electric model, make sure the cord is not frayed or worn.
- Never use an extension cord with a portable heater.
- Keep children and pets away from portable heaters. It only takes a second for curiosity to lead to a serious burn.
- Turn heaters off when you leave home or go to bed. It doesn't make sense to lose your possessions or your life while trying to save energy.
- If you are using a kerosene heater, use only IK kerosene as a fuel. Never use gasoline or any other flammable liquid in a kerosene heater.
- Follow all the manufacturer's instructions.

If you have any questions about the safe use of portable heaters, contact your local fire and rescue station.

Medicare Notes and Social Security F.Y.I.

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Additional information about Medicare changes for 2006 can be found at www.medicare.gov or www.hhs.gov.

Monthly Social Security Income benefits for more than 52 million Americans increased 4.1% January 1, 2006.

Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits increase automatically each year based on the rise in the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers* (CPI-W), from the third quarter of the prior year to the corresponding period of the current year. This year's increase in the CPI-W was 4.1%. For more Social Security information, please visit www.socialsecurity.gov.

Trustee Tracking

Officers and Board Members 2006

Employees' Retirement System

Chairman - Robert Carlson

Vice Chairman - Kevin North

Treasurer - Robert Mears

Frank Alston

Randy Creller

Walter Leppin

Peter Schroth

Thomas Stanners

Gordon Trapnell

John Yeatman

Police Officers Retirement System

Chairman - Lt. Erin Schaible

Vice Chairman - Major Josiah Moser, III

Treasurer - Robert Mears

James Dooley, Jr.

Craig Dyson

Brendan Harold

Stuart Rakoff

Uniformed Retirement System

Chairman - Vincent Bollon

Vice Chairman - Captain John Niemiec

Treasurer - Robert Mears

Charles Formeck

Frank Henry Grace, III

Kevin Kincaid

Donald Maddrey

Peter Schroth

Tax Preparation Help

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- In most situations, it is necessary to visit an AARP Tax-Aide site in person to have your tax returns prepared by AARP Tax-Aide volunteers. However, when needed, arrangements may be made to assist shut-ins and homebound disabled persons to provide counseling at special sites, such as hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, etc. To request an AARP Tax-Aide volunteer to serve a special group of persons at a specific location, send an e-mail to taxaide@aarp.org.

Tax Tip:

Avoid headaches; prepare your taxes early.

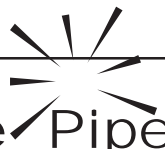
- If you do not have e-mail, you can contact AARP Tax-Aide by phone at 1-888-AARP-NOW or write to: AARP Tax-Aide, 601 E. Street NW, Washington DC 20049-1214. Please note, during the tax season the volume of mail is extremely high. If possible, please contact them by phone or e-mail for a quicker reply.
- With the help of more than 32,000 volunteers, the AARP Tax-Aide program is the nation's largest, free, volunteer-run tax preparation and assistance service. Tax-Aide provides free tax preparation and assistance services to millions of low- and

middle-income taxpayers, with special attention to those ages 60 and older. Please be aware however, if your tax return is relatively complex you will be advised to seek professional tax assistance.

- If an AARP Tax-Aide site is not available in your local area, contact the IRS directly for information about other free tax preparation assistance:
 - 1-800-829-1040
 - 1-800-829-4477 (*tax info and tax refund status*)
- Electronic filing and online counseling are also offered by the program.

The Tax-Aide program's funding sources include the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS), AARP, and private contributions.

Even if you don't need assistance with your taxes, maybe you can volunteer to help someone else. As the Tax-Aide program continues to grow, AARP is continually recruiting dedicated individuals to join their team. In a recent survey, 96 percent of AARP Tax-Aide volunteers were satisfied with their experience. Many stay with the program year after year - many of their volunteers have been with the program for more than 15 years. Visit <http://www.aarp.org/money/taxaide/volunteertaxaide/> to learn more about volunteering with Tax-Aide.



POP Goes the Pipe !

Every year the fire department responds to hundreds of minor water pipe breaks. Although generally not a real danger, water freezing in cold and hot water pipes can cause serious problems. While the freezing takes place, the pipe begins to swell and may burst. In most cases, the actual break doesn't appear until the water begins to thaw. The following tips may help prevent frozen pipes in your home:

- Shut off water to unheated areas of your home and to outdoor faucets. Don't forget to drain these pipes. Open cabinet doors and service access ways so heat can get into these otherwise hidden areas where pipes are located.
- Leaving a faucet on, with a slow trickle may or may not keep the pipe from freezing; you can't count on this method. There are some specially designed, UL-approved heat tapes that can be used in unheated areas, but you need to be cautious. If these methods are used, be sure to follow the directions exactly; a slight variation could cause a fire.

- Locate the shut-off valves for both the hot and cold water, and the power shut-off for the hot water heater. In the event a pipe freezes, first shut off the water valve to that pipe (and the water heater if it's the hot water pipe). Then slowly thaw it out. Never use a torch as that will thaw the water too quickly and weaken the pipe, almost always guaranteeing a broken pipe. Room temperature heat and careful use of a hair dryer are good methods.
- If the pipe breaks, quickly shut off the water valve. Call a plumber to fix the break correctly. At this time you may consider having the pipe or pipes rerouted through less vulnerable areas.
- When should you call the fire department? Call if the water gets in or near electrical outlets or panels, or if the water threatens a pilot light or power to a water heater or furnace.

If you have any further questions about water pipe breaks, please contact your local fire and rescue station, the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department's Public Information and Life Safety Education Section at 703-246-3801, TTY 703-385-4419, or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fire.

Reverse Mortgages - Home Made Money

Until recently, there were two main ways to get cash from your home: you could sell your home, but then you'd have to move; or you could borrow against your home, but then you'd have to make monthly loan repayments. Now there is a third way of getting money from your home that does not require you to leave it or to make regular loan repayments.

A **"reverse" mortgage** is a loan against your home that you do not have to pay back for as long as you live there. With a reverse mortgage, you can turn the value of your home into cash without having to move or repay a monthly loan.

The cash you get from a reverse mortgage can generally be paid to you in several ways:

- all at once
- as a regular monthly cash advance
- as a "creditline" account that lets you decide when and how much of your available cash is paid to you; or
- as a combination of these payment methods

No matter how this loan is paid out to you, you typically don't have to pay anything back until you die, sell your home, or permanently move out of your home. To be eligible for most reverse mortgages, you must own your home and be 62 years of age or older.

The above information was condensed from an AARP's publication titled "Home Made Money - A Consumer's Guide to Reverse Mortgages". To order a complimentary copy by phone, call 1-800-209-8085 or visit www.aarp.org/revmort/list and print your own copy.

Dear Fairfax County Government and FCPS Retirees,

You are invited to attend
the next

Millennium Forum presentation:
"The Flight of the Creative Class"

Wednesday, March 1, 2006
10:30 a.m. – Noon, Fairfax County
Government Center Board Auditorium
Dr. Richard Florida, Author of the
bestselling book: *The Rise of the
Creative Class: And How It's Trans-
forming Work, Leisure, Community
and Everyday Life*

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10680 Main Street ♦ Suite 280 ♦ Fairfax, Virginia 22030 ♦ 800-333-1633 ♦ 703-279-8200
e-mail: retire@fairfaxcounty.gov ♦ internet: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/retbrd/

Retirement Associations

Keep your Retirement Association informed of address and phone number changes!

The Retirement Associations frequently request updated contact information for Fairfax County retirees. Due to privacy considerations, we are **unable** to provide them with that sort of requested information for their mailings. If you are already a member, or interested in becoming a member, please keep them informed of address and phone number updates. For information on membership or to change your address, contact:

Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Retirement Association

Louis Berkeszi: 703-780-3835 (day)

louis@englesidecarcare.com

Annual Dues is \$24.00



Fairfax County Retired Police Association

James Covell, 703-426-2781

COVEL648@erols.com

Annual Dues: \$15.00



Fairfax County Retired Employees Association

Marge Quick, 703-368-2998

Annual Dues is \$5.00

Lifetime Membership is \$50.00

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